

**Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq in New York City**

*September 19, 2016*

*Bombings in New York City and Seaside Park, NJ/Stabbings in St. Cloud, MN*

*President Obama.* Let me begin by just commenting on the events that have unfolded today. This morning, I talked about the fact that there was a person of interest that the FBI and law enforcement had identified with respect to the bombs that had been planted in the New York and New Jersey area. As everybody is now aware, that individual has been apprehended.

And I just want to start by commenting on the extraordinary work and coordination that's taken place between the FBI and local law enforcement. For us to be able to apprehend a suspect in just a little over 24 hours after an event takes place like this, it is outstanding police work, outstanding law enforcement work.

I, in particular, want to give a heartfelt thanks to the New Jersey police officers who were able to apprehend this individual. I had a chance to talk to them briefly before I came down to my meetings here. They are going to be fine. They have sustained some modest injuries, but ones that they'll rapidly recover from. They were in good spirits. And I communicated to them how appreciative the American people were, as well as people in the region. It's just one more reminder of the extraordinary skill and sacrifice and courage of our law enforcement officers, and what they put on the line every single day to make sure that we are safe.

Beyond that, obviously information is still unfolding about what might have motivated the suspect. I'm going to leave it up to the FBI and local law enforcement authorities to discuss those details with you. I will also comment on the fact that in—with respect to the Minnesota stabbings that occurred, I had a chance to talk to the off-duty police officer there who undoubtedly saved a lot of lives and prevented further injury because of his quick and effective action. And I told him that, once again, the American people were appreciative of his work and his heroism.

*Iraq-U.S. Relations*

Now, one of the challenges that we face is—in addition to being an open society in which individuals who are disturbed in some fashion can carry out violence against the American people—the big danger we have right now is, is that we have an organization in ISIL that is actively trying to radicalize and promote extremism of this sort. In addition, they are directly carrying out and planning constant attacks not only overseas, but within Iraq and within Syria.

And so it is with great appreciation that I welcome Prime Minister Abadi here, along with his delegation. Thanks to the sacrifices of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi Armed Forces, since I last met with him face to face a year ago, we have made significant progress in rolling back ISIL. They have now lost over half of the populated territory that they had gained and were still maintaining as recently as last year. And what we've seen now is just steady progress as the Iraqi security forces have gained more confidence as they have coordinated with the 67-member coalition against ISIL.

And now, what we have been discussing and what we're focusing on is to go right at the heart of the ISIL operations in Mosul. Now, this is going to be a challenging battle. Mosul is a large city, and ISIL has embedded itself deeply within that city. But because of the prepositioning of forces, because of the cooperation between the coalition and the Iraqi security forces, because

of the cooperation and courage of the Kurdish Peshmerga, we feel confident that we will be in a position to move forward fairly rapidly.

Now, it will be a tough fight. And once it is initiated, one of the things that we discussed is the importance of not just driving ISIL out of Mosul, but making sure that the population there that invariably is going to be displaced and will have suffered, and is going to be looking for warmth and food and water and shelter, that we are prepared to help provide rapid humanitarian assistance, and that we can rebuild the city in a way that assures not only ISIL does not come back, but extremist ideologies born out of desperation do not return.

And so a lot of our work today is going—has been focused on making sure that that happens. I am very grateful that Prime Minister Abadi has consistently operated in a way that indicates his commitment to an inclusive Iraq that treats everybody fairly, respects human rights. And the work that we're doing with the Iraqi government will adhere to those principles, not just in the Mosul campaign, but beyond.

But this is going to be hard. This is going to be challenging and will require resources. We're going to be asking Congress to step up in support of this effort, and we're going to be asking other countries to step up in support of this effort.

And my thanks go out not only to the Iraqi forces that have borne the brunt of the progress that's been made inside of Iraq, as well as the Kurdish Peshmerga, but also obviously our outstanding men and women in uniform. Although they are not on the front lines of the fight and not are—not involved directly in combat, it's still a dangerous area to operate. And I think Prime Minister Abadi would be the first to say that our men and women from all branches of our Armed Forces have operated with incredible effectiveness and courage in providing the training and the assistance that has allowed us to make these gains.

So, hopefully, by the end of this year, we will have seen further progress with respect to Mosul, and that we will continue to see further progress with respect to economic and political stabilization inside of Iraq.

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your good work, and thank you to all the members of your team for the excellent work that they've done, as well.

Please.

*Prime Minister Abadi.* Thank you, Mr. President. I think Daesh is a huge threat, a terrorist threat to the whole world, not only for Iraq. Two years ago, we had been battling Daesh to protect Baghdad. Today, we are battling Daesh in the last stronghold in Mosul. And we hope within the next few months we're going to kick Daesh out of Mosul, and we'll deliver a huge blow to what Daesh believes in. This is very important to remove this terrorist organization and to crush it. It's a very dangerous organization. It has very dangerous ideology. It has very dangerous instruments and means of recruiting young people. It has a huge influence in the Internet and other social media. So they must be crushed on the ground, and our heroic fighters are doing that.

Of course, the support which has been given to Iraqis by the United States and other coalition partners is very important for us in terms of training, logistical support, providing air cover to our fighters on the ground, and of course preventing Daesh from having more recruits and more financial support. This is very important. I think our next challenge is how we stop these terrorists from recruiting other young people from all over the world. I think we have listed something like a hundred countries where these terrorists are coming from. Some of them are not probably disadvantaged; probably some of them are from middle class families, some of them from families who are well off. So I think this a huge challenge for all of us—how we can stamp out this terrorism, which is probably affecting the whole world, and not only for Iraq.

The damage in Iraq is huge due to Daesh. But the liberation of the areas, bringing refugees back to these liberated areas is a huge reward not only for these refugees, but for every one of us. This is my job, to bring all the Iraqis together, to treat all the Iraqis the same in Iraq. Now, we don't have first-class and second-class citizens in Iraq. All Iraqis are first-class citizens, regardless of their affiliation, regardless of their religion, regardless of their sect, regardless of their ethnic origin. We treat Iraqis the same. I hope everybody in Iraq will do the same.

There are huge challenges in Iraq. Daesh has caused a lot of damage in the relationship between communities. They have killed Yezidis, they have killed Shia, they have killed Christians, they have killed Sunnis, as well. So they have even caused divisions between the same tribe in the same area. So it's a huge task on our—I think, on our shoulder.

We believe in reconciliation. Mr. President, I called for national reconciliation in the day after liberation of Fallujah. And I still believe in reconciliation of the country. People have to live together. But, of course, those who have committed crimes, they have to be punished. But we have to be very careful in bringing the law. We have to follow the rule of law. And we're entitled to do that. And I think we have been managing well in the areas which we have liberated. There are excesses, which are unacceptable to us. And we are prepared, and we are very—we have the resolve to stamp them out. And we are doing this exactly.

Thank you very much for the support that was given to Iraq. And Iraq, of course, is fighting on the behalf of all the world to defeat Daesh, and we will do it soon. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. in the Holmes I room at the Lotte New York Palace hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ahmad Khan Rahami, suspect in the New York and New Jersey bombings of September 17; Officers Peter Hammer and Angel Padilla of the Linden, NJ, Police Department; and Officer Jason Falconer of the Avon, MN, Police Department. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as "Daesh."

*Categories:* Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Iraq, Prime Minister al-Abadi.

*Locations:* New York City.

*Names:* Abadi, Haider al-; Falconer, Jason; Hammer, Peter; Padilla, Angel; Rahami, Ahmad Khan.

*Subjects:* Iraq : Iraqi military and security forces; Iraq : Prime Minister; Iraq : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Iraq : U.S. military detachment; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; Minnesota : Stabbings in St. Cloud; New Jersey : Bombing in Seaside Park; New York : New York City :: Bombing in Chelsea neighborhood; New York : President's visits; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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